



Parents Promoting Health

1. Model it: Show, practice, correct.

Food & Nutrition¹:

Eat fruits, vegetables, milk, and whole grains with meals or snacks. Let your children see how much you enjoy these foods.

Physical Activity²:

Show your commitment by having an active lifestyle yourself, and make physical activity part of your family's daily routine such as designating time for family walks or playing active games together.

Positive Body Image³:

Demonstrate care and respect for your body. Let your children know that you take yourself and your health seriously.

2. Provide family time: Invest in your family.

Food & Nutrition:

Focus on each other at mealtime. Talk about fun and happy things at mealtime. Turn off the television. Take phone calls later. Try to make meals a stress-free time. Family mealtime does not have to be dinner. Try breakfast, lunch, or even a healthy snack together. Eat a meal or snack at a table or counter.

Physical Activity:

Turn off the television and make physical activity a family affair. Ride bikes, hike, and walk, play basketball, or do yard work together as a family. Encourage your children to find fun activities to do with family members.

Positive Body Image:

Talk together as a family, focus on health and fitness and not weight and body shape. Never put yourself down for how you look in front of your children. Don't tolerate anyone else putting you down either—or your child, or another person.

3. Encourage healthy behaviors: Contribute to a lifetime of health.

Food & Nutrition:

Go shopping for food together. Doing so can teach your children about foods and nutrition and assist your children in making their own healthy choices.

Physical Activity:

Provide opportunities for children to be active by playing with them. Give them active toys and equipment, and take them to places where they can be active. Encourage and support your children in sports and other activities that give them the experience of living fully and masterfully in their body. Try something new with your children and build competency together.

Positive Body Image:

Remember: there's no such thing as a "joke" about someone's body. Research shows that teasing and harassment contribute to the development of poor body image which can lead to unhealthy eating patterns. Take people seriously for what they think, say and do.

4. Praise and reward: Focus on specific behaviors and discuss what led up to the behavior and the results.

Food & Nutrition:

Show your love with hugs and kisses. Comfort with hugs and talks. Discuss with your children why they chose a specific behavior and what resulted from their choice. Choose not to offer sweets as rewards. Find ways other than eating to celebrate small victories on any given day.

Physical activity:

Offer positive reinforcement for any physical activity in which your child participates, no matter if they win or lose.

Positive Body Image:

React appropriately when your children are upset, try going for a walk and talking together. Your time is one of the most nourishing resources you can offer them. Shop together for clothes that flatter you and your child's body type.

5. Limit screen and media time: Develop richness in your children.

Food & Nutrition:

Get some physical activity and avoid marketing from the media. Try having a discussion that does not involve brand-name toys, movies, video games and television.

Physical Activity:

Limit the time your children watch TV or play video games to no more than two hours per day. Instead, find fun activities to do with the family or on their own that simply involve more activity.

Positive Body Image:

Keep an eye out for "weightist" messages in the media with your children. Name, discuss and refute them. Children need to hear parental critique of inappropriate messages again and again.

6. Listen to your children: Teach them the value of being heard.

Food & Nutrition:

Offer a small, healthy snack if your children say they are hungry. Offer choices by asking "would you like broccoli or cauliflower for dinner" instead of "do you want broccoli for dinner?"

Physical Activity:

Encourage your child to try different types of physical activity. Listen for what types of sports they like, such as team sports, individual sports, or being active in other ways such as hiking, horseback riding, or maybe even doing farm and ranch chores!

Positive Body Image:

Let your children know that you love them, no matter what they weigh! Listen to their opinions, show appreciation for their uniqueness and, as often as possible, allow them to take the lead. If you are worried about their weight, talk to a pediatrician or a nutritionist.

7. Promote their individuality and creativity: Find their uniqueness.

Food & Nutrition:

Name a family dish your child helps make. Serve "Janie's Salad" or "Sam's Elk Stew." Encourage your child to invent new snacks.

Physical Activity:

Encourage them to express interest in new activities. Ask them to try activities, however don't push them if it becomes obvious they don't enjoy the activity or do not have the aptitude for the activity.

Body Image:

Promote wearing clothes that express who they are, regardless of their size or shape. Don't let body shape keep them (or you) from doing things they want because they don't "look the part."

1) Note: Food and nutrition parenting information slightly revised from: Be a Healthy Role Model for Children: 10 Tips for Setting Good Examples, MyPyramid, USDA, <http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/TenTips/RoleModelTipsheet.pdf>

2) Note: Physical activity parenting information slightly revised from: Tips for Parents—Physical Activity, American Medical Association as found in Palo Alto Medical Foundation, <http://www.pamf.org/teen/parents/health/exercise.html>

3) Note: Body image parenting information slightly revised from: The Parents Guide to Full of Ourselves, A Wellness Program to Advance Girl Power, Health & Leadership, Steiner-Adair, C. & Sjostrom, L., Teachers College Press: 2006), <http://www.teacherscollegepress.com/pdfs/FOOparentsguide.pdf>